

REMARKS

Claims 26-31 and 33-40 are pending in the application. By this Amendment, claims 1-4, 18-25, 32, and 41-43 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer toward resubmission of these claims in a continuation application. Additionally, a substitute Abstract is submitted with this Amendment to replace the originally-filed Abstract. No new matter has been added. Applicants respectfully request entry of this Amendment and allowance of this application.

Initially, Applicants thank Examiner Kim for indicating that claims 26-31 and 33-40 are allowable.

As another initial matter, Applicants note that a Request for Acknowledgment of Receipt of Priority Document was filed on April 29, 2002 with a copy of Form PCT/IB/304, which indicates that the priority document for this case (Italian Patent Application No. TO99A000948, filed November 2, 1998) was submitted or transmitted to the PCT International Bureau. A courtesy copy of this Request is attached for the Examiner's convenience. Applicants still have not received such acknowledgment from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). Accordingly, Applicants request that the USPTO acknowledge receipt of the priority document for this application in response to this Amendment.

In the Office Action, the Examiner objected to claim 32 as allegedly being in improper form. As mentioned above, claim 32 has been canceled. Therefore, Applicants submit that the objection to claim 32 is moot and should be withdrawn.

Claims 1-4, 18, 19 and 42 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,616,248 to Schal (hereinafter "Schal"). Claims 20-25 and 41 were rejected

under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Schal. Claim 43 was rejected as being unpatentable over WO 95/08299 in view of Schal.

As discussed above, claims 1-4, 18-25, and 41-43 have been canceled. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the § 102(b) and § 103(a) rejections of claims 1-4, 18-25, and 41-43 are moot and should be withdrawn.

Applicants respectfully request that this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 be entered by the Examiner, placing claims 26-31 and 33-40 in condition for allowance. Applicants submit that the Amendment After Final does not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, since all of the elements and their relationships claimed were either earlier claimed or inherent in the claims as examined, and were indicated as allowable by the Examiner. Therefore, this Amendment should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

Furthermore, Applicants submit that the entry of the amendment would place the application in better form for appeal, should the Examiner dispute the patentability of the pending claims.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants submit that this claimed invention, as amended, is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of the prior art references cited against this application. Applicants therefore request entry of this Amendment and timely allowance of the pending claims.

The Office Action contains characterizations of the claims and the related art with which Applicants do not necessarily agree. Unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicants decline to subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

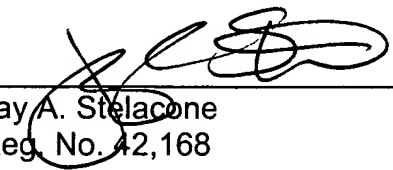
Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge
any additional required fees to our deposit account no. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

FINNEGAN, HENDERSON, FARABOW,
GARRETT & DUNNER, L.L.P.

Dated: April 22, 2004

By: _____


Jay A. Stelaccone
Reg. No. 42,168

Attachments: Substitute Abstract
Copy of Request for Acknowledgment of Receipt of Priority Document
and Form PCT/IB/304, filed on April 29, 2002